

THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF VIRTUAL UPDATE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 01.05.2020

PRESENT: A Coleman-Cooke (CG and Chair), C Cooney (CG), M Gaze (CG), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), M McClintock (EM), D Still (Staff Governor).

OFFICERS: J Chance (VP), G Cumiskey (DP), G Duffy-McGhie (DOP), Z Foster (Clerk).

Key: CG – College Governor, SG – Student Governor, EM – External Member, DP – Deputy Principal, VP – Vice Principal, AP – Assistant Principal, DOP – Director of Programme.

1. Apologies for Absence

M Laidler (CG) and A Stephenson (EM).

2. Student Engagement Update – J Chance

J Chance updated the Committee on how engagement was being measured and that the figures were reported to Covid 19 membership, CMT and SLT weekly. The headline figures for last week (week 5) were as follows:

FE	85% (this was further split into Departments)
Adults FE	85%
Access	93-94%
A Level	89%
HE	99%
TTE	94%
Apprenticeships	90%
Maths	50%
English	55%

He drew attention to the consistent picture for Access, A Level and HE and outlined the different reporting required for Apprenticeships in light of furloughing for some. It was confirmed that there had only been 28 breaks in learning thus far (though these numbers were expected to increase). As anticipated, the figures for Maths and English were lower.

Governors' questions and discussion included: how engagement was measured and the need for differing methods, and the associated subjectivity; detailed consideration of Apprenticeship engagement which was volume based through Smart Assessor and of further issues relating to furloughed apprenticeships and future redundancies; observations of on-line learning by G Duffy McGhie's team; the high expectation country wide of reduced student engagement over the next two months; methods of online learning and required flexibilities to suit both students and staff; current BTEC delivery (assignments only); various cut off points for delivery for key areas (A Levels; Access); DfE stance on ensuring no students could be disadvantaged and related Ofqual guidance; grading and ranking generally and in relation to vocational (grading only); the variety of approaches by the awarding bodies and the complexities in relation to occupational competencies and delaying assessments.

Action by J Chance and Z Foster – to send the high detailed statistics for Week 5 out to the Committee and place in Board IQ within the Standards Shelf.

3. Assessment Update – J Chance and G Cumiskey

J Chance updated the Committee on the work by the Heads of Quality who had met on 30 April 2020. The mechanisms for predicting grades (6000+) and the appeals system were discussed in full. J Chance clarified that the appeals process was two-fold: College based - where only the process could be appealed, and through the Awarding Body in relation to grades. A clear appeals process would be in place for results in August.

He also outlined that some online exams were taking place and gave examples of how this was working. Further detail was also given on the following:

- Apprenticeships - July completion date and delivery could be delayed, the release of 70 standards where end point had been delivered and of delays for other courses
- HE – there was close working with the OU on both assignments and delivery (already set up for online). The last week of delivery would be the week before half term. Discussions about standards and in-college support were discussed.
- BTEC/HNC and HND – up to Level 6 predicted grades would be used with further guidance to come through for HNC and HND
- A Levels – there were a number of external examiners in the Department which should make grade predictions more accurate
- GCSE – volume was a huge issue. K Burgess would have to standardize throughout in relation to the ranking of students. The deadline for this was 1st week in June.
- Access would be organized by C Ramsden
- Vocational courses would be assessed by the Heads of Quality.

The Committee acknowledged the huge challenge ahead.

Discussion and questioning included: the complexities of ranking large numbers of students (including group ranking and the mechanisms to be used); high percentage of online teaching and of other methods used in some instances; benefits of current systems for predicted grades to ensure accuracy; expected outcomes based on predictions for key areas (likely similar picture to last year); the effect of no official performance data this year including official advice from the DfE that data could not be used to performance manage staff; complications with progression and destinations; and recruitment to apprenticeships.

4. Apprenticeships Update – J Chance and G Cumiskey

A full update was given including: the development of 3 different models for September depending on the scenarios of apprenticeship recruitment being one of i) no growth ii) loss of 50% and iii) loss of 20%; assessor caseloads and redeployment options; Apprenticeship QUIP progress with a quarter three update this week; and the June external review.

Governors' discussed: apprenticeship recruitment; apprenticeship redundancies and the associated risks; the value of having the external review planned for June to still go ahead if possible even if remote.

Governors had been very impressed by the Apprenticeship team in February and acknowledged the potential difficulties going forward which could hamper progress.

Action by J Chance and Z Foster – to send Apprenticeship Tracker information to the Committee and place on Board IQ within the Standards Shelf.

5. KPIs Update – J Chance

The document had been updated and would be sent out to the Committee.

Action by J Chance and Z Foster – to send the KPI update to the Committee and place on Board IQ within the Standards Shelf.

6. Future Planning for Return to College – SLT

G Cumiskey updated the Committee on a possible return to College including:

- any remaining time this academic year would focus on looking at those groups who needed to be in College to develop practical skills.
- a full timetable review assuming social distancing would need to be maintained with various options being considered including: a reduction of in class contact mixed with distance learning; an extra hour for English and Maths through Curriculum 360 distance learning
- the key income/recruitment concerns remained with apprenticeships

- some potential full cost income including 14 courses which had been flipped to online with more being considered and an update to Access to HE Health and international interest which could be further developed and could also lead to progression to HE courses within the College without impacting on quality; possibly developing Access for Business too
- Progression – students who had planned to progress to apprenticeships and new potential students were being contacted by the College to discuss short courses until Apprenticeships open up
- it was expected that full time student numbers would not drop
- it was expected that the College day be extended up to 7-8.30pm to accommodate social distancing regulations

7. New Teaching and Learning Process – G Duffy-McGhie

G Duffy McGhie informed the Committee about the new process to encourage innovation and development of staff without the risk of being judged. He outlined three groups i) Developmental staff (new staff) with a reduced timetable and dedicated mentor support ii) those staff who dipped in and out of performance issues for a number of reasons who would still get a focused Department review and iii) the more consistent performers who would have mentors and be involved in teaching squares to develop teaching and learning innovations. Unannounced walkthroughs would remain. Additionally, within A Levels there was a focus on collaboration and communication and working with managers and DoPs.

G Duffy McGhie would be preparing the outline document within the next week or so for consideration. It would also include a new focus on staff digital capacities beyond managing through the crisis and there would be self assessment in 7 key areas.

The process would also look at student capabilities alongside staff. Governors discussed digital poverty in relation to this and whilst it was acknowledged that digital poverty cases were small (1% , there was additional evidence on home environment sometimes having a detrimental effect on learning. 500+ laptops had been issued to students (and some staff) ahead of lock down.

Governors' questions and discussion included: IT capacity and resource needs; blended learning and staff capacity; the digital innovation by staff which needed to be harnessed going forward; possible DfE funding for hardware for students; standardizing of devices for staff; how quality would be assessed within the new process (3 areas – collaboration, communication and assessment); software for online learning, specifically break out rooms (including the blue button through Canvas, Google classroom and Teams); and staff development and support for digital technology and flexibility more widely during the lockdown.

8. Additional Q&As – Committee

- How was additional support for students continuing during lockdown? All students who were originally on 1:1 support were still getting the support through contacts with their tutor and LSA. high risk students were contacted weekly and case conferences were happening virtually. Predicted grades were based on support still happening.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting – A Coleman Cooke

It was agreed to move the date of the next meeting by a week.

Post Meeting Note: the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 26 May 2020 (virtual).

10. Any other Business

Governors praised the College Team for their considerable efforts.

Due to connection issues, Z Lewis gave the following additional comments to the Committee via email on 1 May 2020 immediately after the meeting:

- We have almost completed our progression survey and it interestingly already suggests more students will be staying on with us next year than usual (in both FE and HE) – with the drop coming

from those seeking employment. This implies that already – students are expecting lower employment opportunities and are choosing to extend their learning until the economy picks up. We are aware that Universities will be concerned about international income and therefore looking to secure more local learners so competition will increase – but this affords us the same opportunities too.

- As Gary said we are working up various timetabling options for next year – including blended learning / rolling timetables / extended day .We are worried that students and parents may still be concerned about health risk and whether we can realistically social distance for all at all times. We are also concerned that even if we can plan this – students would need to access public transport and this may cause some concern. We could see a huge increase in enrolment due to unemployment levels or a reduction due to health concerns. We simply won't know until September so will need to be fleet of foot. The key thing is thinking now about all our various responses and this is well underway.
- IT are investigating a number of changes to our investment plans :
 - Providing students with their own personal keyboards so they don't need to touch computers that others have recently touched whilst on site.
 - Looking at the new government scheme and whether we can access this and supplement this with commercial lease options (like schools do – for our 2 year students) or BYOD options (students bring their own device in). If this is possible – this could significantly change how we invest in the future. However it is not simple – many adults would still need college access to IT.
 - We have a new pot of £260k for IT innovation – but you'll see shortly how we are risk managing lots of income risks at the moment too so will need to review this regularly to ensure we don't over commit our capital in such uncertain times. We are discussing this next week with corporate services.
- The skills minister has announced some support for apprenticeship providers but this is of limited use to most (including us). The key impact is reduction in new starts and this could amount to a huge drop next year. We are doing a number of things to plan for this including looking at how we could flex assessor caseloads and contracts if this happens to try and retain our good staff but manage costs throughout this period. It is probably worth noting that if we have an issue – it will be much greater for private training providers where this is the majority of their income. It is possible there will be some financial support here in the future – although I believe the DfE may also want to take the opportunity to rationalise the market (which it now acknowledges is too open and offering lower quality than before).
- I was on a call with all the NE Principals last week and it was clear from that teleconference that a) our engagement levels fair favourably with others and b) our decision to reduce the Easter break to one week was a good one as most other colleges are reporting reductions in engagement after Easter.

The meeting closed at 10.40am